

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 were pending in this application. By way of this amendment and reply to the Office Action mailed January 16, 2003, claims 1, 2, 11 and 12 have been amended, claims 17-24 have been added, and claims 3-10 and 13-16 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, claims 1, 2, 11, 12 and 17-24 are presently pending for further consideration on the merits.

As an initial matter, approval of the drawing change request (made to Figure 4) filed on June 10, 2002, is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,052,442 to Cooper et al. This rejection, to the extent that it may be applied to the presently pending claims, is traversed for at least the reasons given below.

In Cooper et al., when a caller calls a predetermined phone number, an answering machine determines whether or not the caller is a service provider. If yes, then messages are downloaded from the service provider and stored by the answering machine. If no, then the caller is provided with an outgoing message, and is given the opportunity to leave his or her voice message. See column 5, line 40 to column 6, line 7 of Cooper et al.

Column 6, lines 30-42 of Cooper et al. describes a feature in which the user may be paged when the answering machine determines that a particular message (e.g., with a fax attachment) has been received by the answering machine.

Column 6, lines 43-67 of Cooper et al. describes a feature in which, when the answering machine determines that the caller is a service provider, e-mails stored at the service provider are downloaded onto a memory of the answering machine. As one additional feature, the user is notified by way of a page, whereby portions of the received e-mails are provided to the user, so that the user can then determine whether or not to respond immediately to some or all of the received e-mails. See column 7, lines 1-13 of Cooper et al.

Furthermore, in Cooper et al., when a voice message is received, it is stored in a memory 12, and a processor 10 may obtain an e-mail address of the

intended recipient from the header of the received message, to thereby allow the user to respond to the voice message by way of an e-mail message. See column 7, lines 46-51 of Cooper et al.

Column 9, lines 40-46 of Cooper et al. describes that e-mail addresses of senders can be stored beforehand in the memory 12.

However, even with the system of Cooper et al., there is no disclosure or suggestion of a method or system that allows a recipient of a voice mail to send an e-mail response to the sender of the voice mail, in which the recipient's voice reply is retrieved from a memory and then attached to an e-mail addressed to the sender of the e-mail, whereby the sender can then receive the e-mail and review the recipient's voice reply. Rather, Cooper et al. merely allows the recipient to respond to the sender via an e-mail that is sent to the sender, with no suggestion of providing an e-mail attachment of a voice reply to the e-mail that is retrieved from a memory and then sent to the sender.

Therefore, independent claims 1, 2, 11 and 12 are patentable over the disclosure of Cooper et al.

New claims 17-24 have been added to recite additional features of the invention that are not believed to be disclosed or suggested by Cooper et al. For example, new claims 18, 20, 22 and 24 allow for the sender to either review the recipient's e-mail attachment audibly or visually, depending upon the type of e-mail attachment that is sent to the sender from the recipient. Cooper et al. does not disclose or suggest such a feature.

Therefore, for the reasons stated above, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and an early indication of allowance is earnestly solicited.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

31 March, 2003
Date

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**Marked-up Claims:**

1. (Three Times Amended) A voice mail apparatus comprising:

a memory to store received digitized voice in a voice mail sent from a sender,
and wherein the memory further stores at least one voice reply message of a
recipient of the voice mail;

an identifier to identify a sender number attached to the voice mail that
contains the digitized voice, the sender number corresponding to the sender that
has sent the digitized voice; [and]

an e-mail transmitter to send an e-mail from the recipient to the sender;

a table that provides a correspondence between a plurality of e-mail
addresses and a plurality of sender numbers, respectively[,]; and

a control unit configured to control operation of the voice mail apparatus,

wherein the digitized voice is stored at a particular memory address that is
assigned to the sender within the memory, based on the identification of the
sender number as performed by the identifier, [and]

wherein the table is accessed to allow a recipient of the digitized voice to
send an e-mail response to the corresponding e-mail address of the sender,

wherein the control unit obtains the at least one voice response message
of the recipient from the memory, attaches the at least one voice response
message to an e-mail to be sent to the corresponding e-mail address of the
sender, and provides the e-mail to the e-mail transmitter to be output to the
sender, and

wherein the e-mail is capable of being opened by the sender so that the
sender can review the at least one voice response message of the recipient, by
the sender opening the e-mail attachment and reviewing the at least one voice
response message.

2. (Three Times Amended) A voice mail apparatus comprising:

a memory to store received digitized voice in a voice mail sent from a sender,
and wherein the memory further stores at least one voice reply message of a
recipient of the voice mail;

an identifier to identify a proper sender number attached to the voice mail
that contains the digitized voice, the sender number corresponding to the sender
that has sent the digitized voice; [and]

an e-mail transmitter to send an e-mail from the recipient to the sender;

a table that provides a correspondence between a plurality of e-mail
addresses and a plurality of proper sender numbers, respectively[,] and

a control unit configured to control operation of the voice mail apparatus,

wherein the digitized voice is stored at a particular memory address that is
assigned to the sender within the memory, based on the identification of the
sender number as performed by the identifier, [and]

wherein the table is accessed to allow a recipient of the digitized voice to
send an e-mail response to the corresponding e-mail address of the sender,

wherein the control unit obtains the at least one voice response message
of the recipient from the memory, attaches the at least one voice response
message to an e-mail to be sent to the corresponding e-mail address of the
sender, and provides the e-mail to the e-mail transmitter to be output to the
sender, and

wherein the e-mail is capable of being opened by the sender so that the
sender can review the at least one voice response message of the recipient, by
the sender opening the e-mail attachment and reviewing the at least one voice
response message.

11. (Three Times Amended) A method of processing voice mail
comprising the steps of:

storing in a memory, at least one voice reply message from a recipient;

storing, in [a] the memory, a digitized voice sent from a sender to the
recipient;

identifying the sender of the digitized voice upon obtaining the digitized voice from the memory, the identifying being performed based on a sender number corresponding to the sender that is attached to the digitized voice;

storing, based on the sender number, the digital voice at a particular memory address within the memory, the particular memory address being assigned to the sender; [and]

performing retrieval of a table to find an e-mail address of the sender so as to allow a recipient of the digitized voice to respond to the sender, the retrieval being based on the sender number[.]; and

obtaining the at least one voice reply message from the memory and attaching the at least one voice reply message to an e-mail to be sent to the e-mail address of the sender,

wherein the table provides a correspondence between a plurality of e-mail addresses and a plurality of sender numbers, and

wherein the e-mail is capable of being opened by the sender so that the sender can review the at least one voice response message of the recipient, by the sender opening the e-mail attachment and reviewing the at least one voice response message.

12. (Three Times Amended) A method of processing voice mail comprising the steps of:

storing in a memory, at least one voice reply message from a recipient;

storing, in [a] the memory, a digitized voice sent from a sender to the recipient;

identifying the sender of the digitized voice upon obtaining the digitized voice from the memory, the identifying being performed based on a proper number corresponding to the sender that is attached to the digitized voice;

storing, based on the proper number, the digital voice at a particular memory address within the memory, the particular memory address being assigned to the sender; [and]

performing retrieval of a table to find an e-mail address corresponding to the proper number so as to allow a recipient of the digitized voice to respond to the sender, the retrieval being based on the sender number[,]; and

obtaining the at least one voice reply message from the memory and attaching the at least one voice reply message to an e-mail to be sent to the e-mail address of the sender,

wherein the table provides a correspondence between a plurality of e-mail addresses and a plurality of proper numbers, and

wherein the e-mail is capable of being opened by the sender so that the sender can review the at least one voice response message of the recipient, by the sender opening the e-mail attachment and reviewing the at least one voice response message.

17. (New) The voice mail apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the at least one voice response message is first converted to a text message prior to being attached to the email to be output to the sender.

18. (New) The voice mail apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sender is capable of reviewing the at least one voice response message by either audibly playing the e-mail attachment via a computer speaker when the e-mail attachment is an audio file, or visually displaying the e-mail attachment via a computer monitor when the e-mail attachment is a text file.

19. (New) The voice mail apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the at least one voice response message is first converted to a text message prior to being attached to the email to be output to the sender.

20. (New) The voice mail apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the sender is capable of reviewing the at least one voice response message by either audibly playing the e-mail attachment via a computer speaker when the e-

mail attachment is an audio file, or visually displaying the e-mail attachment via a computer monitor when the e-mail attachment is a text file.

21. (New) The method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the at least one voice response message is first converted to a text message prior to being attached to the email to be output to the sender.

22. (New) The method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the sender is capable of reviewing the at least one voice response message by either audibly playing the e-mail attachment via a computer speaker when the e-mail attachment is an audio file, or visually displaying the e-mail attachment via a computer monitor when the e-mail attachment is a text file.

23. (New) The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the at least one voice response message is first converted to a text message prior to being attached to the email to be output to the sender.

24. (New) The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the sender is capable of reviewing the at least one voice response message by either audibly playing the e-mail attachment via a computer speaker when the e-mail attachment is an audio file, or visually displaying the e-mail attachment via a computer monitor when the e-mail attachment is a text file.